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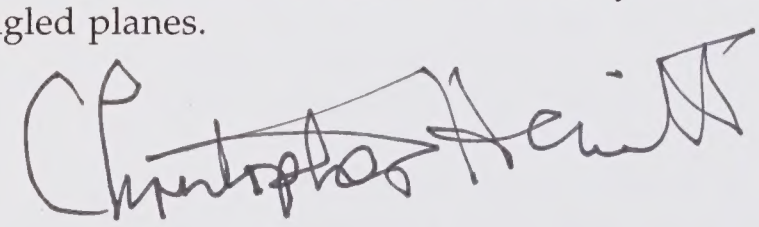
The Edwardiardians

They lived in one of history's breathing spaces — between the repression of Victoria and the tumult of the War, the beginning of the modern world. They had Victorian grandeur — men with beards in dashing frock coats still helped their womenfolk down from horse-drawn carriages, but the ladies spoke up once in a while with a "I can manage quite well by myself, thank you, dear." The ladies wore flamboyant concoctions of hats — all ostrich feathers and folderols, and their gowns were slenderer now, hugging their long lean bones like frail, tubular shells, almost sexy, when they showed a peek of bosom, a curve of thigh, hints of the twenties rebellion to come; Ragtime pianos playing those restrained precursors of Jazz had feet tapping (even the ladies') under the saloon tables. There were lots of raised eyebrows, furtive gay affairs; and though Oscar had his trials the very fact of his existence was a good sign. Elgar, still ardent, wrote long, sighing, string works and brooding enigmas, nostalgic for this lost youth, pacing the Malverns, inventing odd inventions — a soap saver he considered more important than his music.

King Bertie was the very devil of a ladies' man, but he was so adorable, wasn't he, with his sparkling eyes, his long whiskers and the rose in his buttonhole? Rumors that Germany was war-hungry didn't bother us; we'd trounced those beastly Boers after all, even though they'd blown our poor Charlies, Bobs and Freds to bits, their bones laid ever so tastefully in their boxes to calm the doting mothers; they all had doting mothers.

Now was a time of long, soft twilights, a warm, low sun flushing the bricks rose red between the irises, while the swifts veered uncertainly around the eaves' eyebrows like new-fangled planes.



The Edwardians

Christopher Hewitt

for Lindi, Nickie and Randy, Dennis, and Rick

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